

Report on the UNOOSA Meeting
Space Technology for Flood and Fire Disaster Management
Córdoba, Argentina, 24 and 26 November 2003

Between 24 and 26 November 2003, an Expert Meeting on “Space Technology for Flood and Fire Disaster Management” was held at the Instituto de Altos Estudios Espaciales “Mario Gulich” in Córdoba, Argentina. This meeting was jointly organized by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), within the framework of its Programme on Space Applications, the European Space Agency and the National Commission for Space Activities (CONAE) or Argentina.

This meeting was proposed as a continuation of previous Regional Workshops on the Use of Space Technology for Disaster Management, held in different regions of the World. The first workshop was for the Latin American and Caribbean Region was held in La Serena, Chile in November 2000.

The Cordoba’s meeting was organised along two core thematic interest: Floods and Forest Fires. More than 50 persons, from 11 countries attended the conference. They proceeded from National and Regional Institutions responsible for providing disaster management support, other offices of the Public Administration, as well as researchers from Universities and Space Agencies.

After a welcome address, the global objectives of the meeting were reviewed by David Stevens, from UNOOSA, and Mauricio Fea (from ESA). Following these discourses, the participants were split into the two thematic groups, which should study the proposal of a regional project for using remotely sensed and GIS data in improving current early warning systems of floods and forest fires.

Within the forest fire group, the different on-going activities were reviewed by national representatives. Special interest was dedicated to the National Fire Management program of Argentina (currently centralized by the Forest Service in Esquel, with different institutions taking part in research tasks), the activities of INPE and Ibama (Brazil), and Conabio (Mexico).

After these presentations, the participants start to define the guidelines for a project proposal which could base the increasing use of remotely sensed data for fire management in the region. Several input products for a fire risk index were defined, along with its priority level, according to the importance of the variable, the degree of availability and feasibility of the production. The highest priority was defined for the burned land mapping at medium scale (1:500.000 to 1:1.000.000), followed by fuel type maps at local scale (1:50.000), meteorological variables (global scale), human activities, fuel moisture content and hot spots mapping.

The potential methods and data inputs for each product were defined, as well as the responsibilities of different institutions and groups. To continue fostering the integration between the experts interested, it was decided to reinforce the regional network on remote sensing and forest fires (RedLaTIF), founded in Cochabamba (Bolivia) in 2002, and preliminary coordinated by the Department of Geography, University of Alcalá, Spain:

<http://www.geogra.uah.es/redlatif/index.html>

This network is part of the regional activities promoted by the Global Observation of Forest Cover (GOFC-GOLD) Fire Monitoring and Mapping Implementation Team:

<http://gofc-fire.umd.edu/index.asp>

In the Cordoba meeting, it was decided to transfer the web management of the network to CONAE, as well as establish several thematic groups focused around fire risk data inputs (burned land maps, fuel type maps, human variables, meteorological indices, fuel moisture content, landscape variables....). The general coordination of the network will be responsibility of Walter Sione, University of Luján, Argentina.

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